

hearing are proposals being made by the President. Mr. Speaker, that calmed a lot of people down, many of whom were women.

As we went on to discuss the problem of Social Security, I advised them that the Social Security trustees have said now that the trust fund is good until the year 2042 at least.

□ 2030

I also told them that per the Congressional Budget Office, the Social Security fund is good until at least 2052, so to calm down, make sure you are okay and do not send anyone the \$1 or the \$2 that they ask you to save your Social Security. Your Social Security is good.

At our town hall meetings, first in the communities that I mentioned, and then moving on to Detroit, hundreds of citizens, many women, because 24 million women in America right now receive Social Security. Of that number, 7.5 million women disabled receive Social Security. And over 2.7 million children under 18, many of them receive Social Security, and many 18 and under are women. So when we talk about the Social Security issue in our town hall meetings, which were very successful, not combative, giving information, using some of the professors at Wayne State University, such as Professor Dankowski, a professor of gerontology and the aged at the university, we exchanged information.

What my constituents found out at our town hall meetings was that more than 85 percent of Social Security funds that come into Social Security go right back out to beneficiaries. Over 85 percent, and that 14-plus percent is set aside for the trust fund. If we set up private accounts as being proposed by the President and take money out of Social Security, then those people who are current beneficiaries who have paid into the system will have their benefits cut, or we will have to borrow money to make that up.

At a time when we are in deficit spending in this country, it is not the time to borrow. As we discussed Social Security and what is happening with it, good until the year 2042 if you use the Social Security trustees' projections, or 2052 if we use the Congressional Budget Office, we calmed them down and were able to exchange information.

Social Security is the most successful program this country has seen since 1935 when President Roosevelt signed the bill. In 1936, payroll deductions began to be made, and in 1940 the first checks went out to beneficiaries who had been paying into the system. As we know now, many disabled, widowers, and survivors also use their Social Security.

Mr. Speaker, town hall meetings, we have to get out into America. We found that is the best way of communicating to give them the facts so they have the information they need. Without Social Security, women in particular would be living in poverty.

Let us not throw out a good program. Yes, it needs fixing. As a Member who spoke earlier said, there are only three or four options. Either we raise the age, raise the deduction, which is if you make up to \$90,000, your Social Security FICA comes out. If you make over \$90,000, you do not pay any. I am not advocating that at this point, but that is one of the options, raise the age, increase the limit from which we make the payroll deductions, or cut benefits.

There are not a lot of options, but we have time to do what is right for American citizens. Social Security is a good program. It was never intended to be the end all. It was a tripod: Social Security, pensions, and if you were able to save, then those three sides of the triangle would give Americans a comfortable life in their retirement.

My constituents say do not mess with our Social Security. They want it, they have paid into it, and they believe they are entitled to it. As we continue our discussion, let us remember it is the people of America who we serve who we represent and who have paid in. Keep Social Security sound. Let us tweak it and not throw it out.

HECKLING IS NOT A SOLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORTENBERRY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, it has been an interesting experience to be here and listen to the debate tonight on Social Security. I found it interesting in particular to listen to the gentleman from New Jersey read accounts from town hall meetings where Republicans have been attempting to explain the problems that we are facing with Social Security and how many groups, moveon.org, AARP, and others have come to disrupt those meetings.

I do not know if liberals or the Democrats are proud of that, that their supporters are going in to heckle and boo. It seems they are. What does that contribute to the debate? Not much in my opinion. There is a saying that you are entitled to your own opinions, but not to your own facts.

If we look at the facts on Social Security, there are the following: when Social Security started in the 1930s, there were some 42 workers per retiree. In the 1950s, that went to 16 workers per retiree. Today we are down to three workers per retiree. By the time I retire, there will be probably two workers per retiree. You cannot argue with the demographics, and that is where we are headed. Those are the facts. With those facts you have to understand we have got to do something different. This pay-as-you-go system simply is not a model that is going to work with demographics like that.

Fact number two, it was just mentioned a few minutes ago there is a trust fund that is going to pay out

until the year 2042. Where is that trust fund and what does it contain? It is a couple of file cabinets in West Virginia that contain a couple of IOUs. There is no trust fund; there is no money. It is just IOUs. As soon as we start taking out more than we are paying in, we are simply going to incur more debt upon debt we already have. You can talk about the year 2042 and we do not have to worry until then, that is assuming there is money in a trust fund. If somebody knows where that money is hidden, please tell us because it simply is not there. It is a file cabinet with IOUs in it.

Fact number three, there is no easy fix. I just heard one so-called solution that we simply lift the earnings cap so people like Bill Gates who make millions of dollars every year would pay more than just Social Security on the first \$90,000 of income. That sounds good; but upon review, if we included all of the millionaires and others making more than \$90,000 a year, we asked the actuaries what it would do, and it would postpone insolvency just 6 years. So we are just talking on the margins.

Raising the payroll tax, we have done that since the 1930s 19 times. We simply cannot continue to go down that road. I would like to hear somebody seriously propose that. What do we set it at? How much more do we want to tax people?

We have to harness the power of compound interest. We need a new model. That is what the President is proposing. I think it was Albert Einstein who said the most powerful force in the universe is that of compound interest. We have to allow individuals to harness that.

I commend the President for taking the position he has taken. The difference between being a leader and a follower is when you are a leader, you recognize that the people may not be with you and you may need to persuade them and convince them and go out and tell them there is a problem.

There are formidable foes out there, the AARP and others, who will put out information and say there is no problem, there is a trust fund somehow and we do not have to deal with this issue for another 40 years or so. So there is a lot of educating that has to be done. That is what a leader does. A follower says that is where the people are, I do not have to convince them, I just have to join them, and we will just heckle and boo anybody who proposes a solution. That is not leadership, and I am glad the President is actually leading on this, and I commend my colleagues for leading on it as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue. There is no more serious debate that we will have in this coming decade domestically than how to deal with this issue. How do we give individuals the freedom to be more secure in their own retirement. I tend to believe that in the end if you present Americans out there two politicians, one who will stand and say, yes, there is a problem,

we need a fix, and the other who will say there is no problem, there is a trust fund somewhere that will fix it, I think in the end Americans will believe the politician who fesses up to the fact that there is a problem. Demographics do not lie, and we have to deal with it in the future. I commend the President and those moving towards a real solution and who are presenting actual proposals that will move us in the direction we need to go.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MEEHAN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BOUSTANY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CONFISCATED PROPERTY IN ETHIOPIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, I am introducing a bill today concerning the Ethiopian Government's confiscation of property owned by U.S. citizens and the Ethiopian Government's arrogance and intransigence in the face of efforts to rectify the situation.

Mr. Speaker, the Berhane family are constituents and friends. They are black African immigrants who fled the establishment of a communist regime in Ethiopia in the 1970s. They now live in Huntington Beach, California. At one time the Berhane family owned the National Alcohol and Liquor Factory, NALF, in the capital of Ethiopia. The Marxist regime that took over Ethiopia expropriated their property and drove the Berhane family into exile. Well, that Marxist government fell more than a decade ago.

The current government agreed in principle to return all illegally expropriated property, but it has steadfastly refused to return the Berhane family's factory, or offer them just compensation. It seems the distillery is one of the confiscated properties that the heavy-handed rulers of Ethiopia refuse to return to its rightful owners. Perhaps that is because this factory is one of the few businesses that makes a

profit. The smell of corruption at the highest levels of the Ethiopian Government is hard to miss.

Mr. Speaker, this matter should have been settled long ago. This property should have been returned to the Berhane family or just compensation should have been offered. The Berhane family claim is supported by a finding of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, which is part of the United States Government. So this is not a matter of determining whether or not the Berhane family has a just claim; it is a matter of arrogance and probably corruption on the part of the Ethiopian hierarchy.

Mr. Speaker, I am introducing legislation today that will prevent Ethiopia from receiving any benefit from U.S. Government sources until it deals honestly and fairly with the claim of these American citizens. It is a tragedy that the Ethiopian Government is risking the well-being of its people because of its intransigence in dealing with a just claim of an American family.

Mr. Speaker, this act withholds all appropriated U.S. Federal dollars to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia until property claims of American citizens are either returned or the U.S. citizens are justly compensated. With the exception of emergency humanitarian aid, this prohibition on funding includes economic support funds, the Export-Import Bank, foreign military financing, the Global AIDS Initiative, Millennium Challenge Account, and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. This bill further directs international organizations to be required to oppose aid to Ethiopia under these same conditions.

Mr. Speaker, this type of officially sanctioned rip-off that we see in Ethiopia is outrageous. However, it is not just limited to the gang that rules Ethiopia.

□ 2045

Mr. Speaker, there are other governments, be they Cuba or Iran, that are equally guilty of this type of theft. I intend to introduce similar legislation in a broader bill denying aid to all of these foreign governments who deny the proper reimbursement to American citizens who have just property claims against them. Part of that bill, which will include Ethiopia as well, will provide that U.S. citizens with legitimate claims against a government like that in Ethiopia will be able to put a legal hold on the American property and assets owned by the government officials of that government.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for us to stand up for justice, especially for the justice of American citizens. These African immigrants who came here fleeing communism had their property confiscated. The government of Ethiopia has time and again suggested that they would return all property that was illegally confiscated. Yet the Berhane family has not had its property returned. They deserve the rights

of protection of the United States Government.

We will struggle for this legislation, we will pass this legislation, we will keep this fight up until this family gets justice, this family gets their property returned or gets just compensation.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment bills of the House of the following titles:

H. Con. Res. 5. Concurrent resolution providing for the acceptance of a statue of Sarah Winnemucca, presented by the people of Nevada, for placement in National Statuary Hall, and for other purposes.

H. Con. Res. 63. Concurrent resolution permitting the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for a ceremony as part of the commemoration of the days of remembrance of victims of the Holocaust.

SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORTENBERRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Connecticut?

There was no objection.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, it is my great privilege this evening to be able to address a vital subject to all of America, that of preserving and strengthening Social Security. Many of us have had the opportunity over the break to go back to our districts and hold public forums and hearings and town hall meetings, and the input that we received from our citizens has been extraordinary and insightful.

This evening, we will be joined by distinguished members of our caucus, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN), the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY), and hopefully others who will be joining us as well as we seek to report back to America about what is going on.

We are most fortunate to have the man who has followed in the footsteps of the dearly departed Bob Matsui who was a champion on Social Security. The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) is the leading expert in our caucus and on the Committee on Ways and Means in matters of Social Security and has held these forums and hearings not only in his State but has been on